

PART 8: NAJWA



أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ
وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرُ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم
بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

Do you not see that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth? If three converse privately, He is their fourth. If five, He is their sixth. Whether fewer or more, He is with them wherever they may be. Then, on the Day of Judgment, He will inform them of what they have done. Surely Allah has (perfect) knowledge of all things.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ نُهُوا عَنِ التَّجْوَى ثُمَّ يَعُودُونَ لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَيَتَنَاجَوْنَ بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ
وَمَعْصِيَةِ الرَّسُولِ وَإِذَا جَاءُوكَ حَبَّوْكَ بِمَا لَمْ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَيَقُولُونَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ لَوْلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا
اللَّهُ بِمَا نَقُولُ حَسْبُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

Have you not seen those who were forbidden from secret talks, yet they (always) return to what they were forbidden from, conspiring in sin, aggression, and disobedience to the Messenger? And when they come to you (O Prophet), they greet you not as Allah greets you, and say to one another, "Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?" Hell is enough for them—they will burn in it. And what an evil destination!

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَنَاجَيْتُمْ فَلَا تَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَةِ الرَّسُولِ وَتَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْبِرِّ
وَالتَّقْوَى ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

O believers! When you converse privately, let it not be for sin, aggression, or disobedience to the Messenger, but let it be for goodness and righteousness. And fear Allah, to Whom you will (all) be gathered.

إِنَّمَا التَّجْوَى مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ لِيَحْزُنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَيْسَ بِضَارِّهِمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ
فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Secret talks are only inspired by Satan to grieve the

believers. Yet he cannot harm them whatsoever except by Allah's Will. So in Allah let the believers put their trust.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ
انْشُرُوا فَانْشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

O believers! When you are told to make room in gatherings, then do so. Allah will make room for you (in His grace). And if you are told to rise, then do so. Allah will elevate those of you who are faithful, and (raise) those gifted with knowledge in rank. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do.

(Quran 58:7-11)

INTRODUCTION TO THE SESSION

This session is about something which very swiftly destroys the Islamic work - Najwa. Najwa is mentioned a couple of times in the passage from Surah Mujadilah that has been quoted above. Considering the great harms this brings, it is very important to uncover this concept with reasonable detail and elaborate the expected behaviour from the Muslim volunteer workers.

WHAT IS NAJWA AND HOW DOES IT DESTROY THE SHURA

Before we start any further discussion, let's talk about the essence of najwa. Najwa means 'secret discussions with malicious intentions'.

Essentially in any organization, there is a tendency for sub-groups to develop. Let us suppose that there are six people in a committee and three of them are very close friends. So these six people meet every week and three of them, being close friends, go for dinner afterwards. During the dinner, they discuss the same things that were discussed in the meeting and share more opinions about it. What happens then is that you have a sub-group forming within the main group, because they discuss a lot more with each other and their opinion becomes solid. So when they come to the meeting, they already have a single opinion and they are very defensive about that. Anything that comes up against their way or opinion, they deflect it. So they have become a lobby. What this does is that it disperses the unity and frankness of the gathering and of the decision-making process. It cuts away at shura (mutual consultation) because in shura everybody has an equal access to give an opinion and everybody shares their opinion on the same platform. They do not meet afterwards or form blocs on the outside. If such a bloc does get formed outside the forum, it is called najwa. The linguistic meaning of najwa is to get away from or escape from the main body and become an independent entity. So a private

meeting for malicious or evil purposes is what najwa is.

SOME PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF NAJWA AND EVIL ASSEMBLIES

The najwa is catastrophic for any Islamic work. It can destroy the Islamic school, the masjid, a dawah effort or an Islamic organization. When a few people discuss things which they should not discuss outside the forum, they are breaking the trust; the organization meetings, shura forums and what is discussed in them is a form of trust. Those who take them to where they don't belong, they are doing the 'najwa'. So, najwa violates that trust. For example, there's a masjid and its committee or board is discussing whether or not they should build a gym; so they organize a meeting. Everyone on the board is giving an opinion and there are discussions going on. But when the meeting is over, four people on the board get together at one of the guy's houses and they start discussing about what went on in the meeting and say things like, 'Why are they spending so much money on a gym? Who comes anyway? What about the insurance? What about this? What about that?' They said none of those things when they were in the meeting which was the place to say them. The fact that you have an opinion or a concern means it should be said at the meeting and that is shura. If you don't open your mouth there, then you shouldn't open your mouth anywhere else.

Having done the najwa, you come in the next meeting all angry; this is because if one person is upset and they talk to another person, the anger is not doubled, it's squared. It is exponentially worse.

NAJWA TURNS SMALL PROBLEMS INTO BIG ISSUES

Let's understand this with an example. Let's suppose two people are talking about a khutbah and one says, 'You know the khateeb said something I really do not understand', or 'I wasn't comfortable with what he said.' Up until then it was just a minor thing but if four people start discussing it, by the end of it, the poor khateeb is already labelled as a 'deviant' in most cases. It was a small problem; but when four or five people discuss a small problem in an inappropriate manner, it becomes a big problem. It becomes a huge deal and this is essentially what najwa does. It allows for small issues that can be dealt with very easily to grow out of proportion and turns them into very big issues. Shura is not only who you discuss with, but also WHEN you discuss. There's a time and a place to give your opinion.

EXAMPLE OF NAJWA OF MUNAFIQOON

Now in the Prophet ﷺ case, there used to be a few classes of people in his gathering. Most were true Muslims; but there were also some weak Muslims and the hypocrites. The latter

didn't open their mouths when the Prophet ﷺ was talking. When he was done, then they gathered with others and started their evil talk. 'Hey, what did he just say? What's he talking about?' So, right after the meeting, they started undermining what the Messenger ﷺ just said in the meeting. Right after the halaqa! This is najwa. This is massively destructive to the Islamic work.

HOW TO DEAL WITH NAJWA

This is something you should never be a part of. If you are the guy that's starting it, stop it immediately. If you are the guy innocently standing there listening to it, stop listening and walk away. Don't hang around; don't be a part of it!

IS THERE ANYTHING CALLED 'GOOD NAJWA'?

Before elaborating the passage from Surah Majadillah which is the central theme of this section, let's see if there can be any benefits of najwa in certain situations.

A few years before the above verses came down, it was revealed in Surah Nisa:114 that, "There's no good in the Najwa that they do.' Meaning that most of the time when they have a secret meeting, no good comes out of it unless the intention of the secret meeting was to:

- take the good work further,

- to give charity,
- to make reconciliation between the people or
- some other good intention.

Remember, these are the exceptional situations in which Najwa may be accepted; however, this is not the general rule. So if you are doing najwa don't assume it's a 'good najwa'. Its probably not. But here's an example of a good najwa.

The masjid committee decides that, 'We should build a gym at this Masjid. We should have a fundraiser next month.' It's all agreed upon. Then three of you get together over ice cream and you decide, 'Hey, before the fundraise starts, let us put \$5,000 each and let's just get it rolling.. just the three of us for the sake of Allah. Let's just do it ahead of everybody else.'

Or, after a meeting, you noticed one guy was particularly angry and a few of you get together and you decide to speak to this brother. 'Brother we love you; we are in this together.' He says, 'No, but they do not listen to me or my opinion; I keep telling them but they never listen. Why should I be in the Shura? Why did they make me a member if they don't listen to me?' 'Bro, look, we love you. We value your opinion and more than that Allah values your opinion and Allah knows you are sincere. We want you to come. We don't want you to be angry. Anger is from the shaytan.' He replies, 'Yeah, 'I guess you are right', and then he agrees to resolve differences.

That's good najwa. The decision was already made. You didn't go and undermine that decision. You propelled that decision further, and you gave it more momentum. That's good Najwa which puts out fires, not starts them.

So, in general, you should refrain from najwa; however, if you do it based on situation or circumstances at hand, it should better be what can be called 'good najwa'. If it has the potential of turning into a bad thing, stay away from it. Don't go near it; no matter what. So many verses of the Quran are dedicated to this thing. This isn't a small or insignificant matter. Allah did not mention it just once, but repeatedly.

LET'S NOW UNPACK THE PASSAGE FROM SURAH MUJADILLAH THAT DEALS WITH NAJWA

'Have you not considered that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is on the earth? There is in no private conversation between three but that He is the fourth of them, nor are there five but that He is the sixth of them - and no less than that and no more except that He is with them [in knowledge] wherever they are. Then He will inform them of what they did, on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is, of all things, Knowing. Have you not considered those who were forbidden from private conversation, then they return to that which they were forbidden from and converse among themselves about sin and aggression and disobedience to

the Messenger?’ (58:7-8)

NAJWA LEADS TO ANIMOSITY AND PLUCKS THE BARAKAH OUT

The next part of the verse says, ‘They keep holding secret gatherings that add to sin and animosity.’ This is because when you have najwa, the grip of your bloc becomes tighter and you develop a natural animosity towards the other members. This is what happens in most masjid elections across the country and so on. It is very sad. And then we wonder why there is no barakah in our masajids or organized efforts! There are some masajid, when you walk into them you feel, ‘it’s not a real masjid’. On the other hand, when you walk into a blessed masjid which is free from such sinful acts in the background, you also know it and feel it. When you walk into a masjid that is bankrupt from barakah you will feel nothing inside your heart; it’ll be just a building. The goodness is sucked out of it. Najwa is one of those things that suck the goodness out of a masjid or any Islamic project. It just plucks the barakah out.

This, unfortunately, has become the scene of many Islamic organizations that are undercutting one another. Dirty politics and murky elections and so on! Why are they holding secret meetings and asking people to vote for them? What are they doing? We are in this work for Allah. That’s it. There should be

no other aim. If we are not given the opportunity to serve in one organization, it does not mean that we can't serve in other organizations or projects.

DON'T GET HUNG UP ON TITLES

If we are not given certain position or title within the organization, it does not mean that we cannot work for that organization. Don't let us get hung up on our titles like, 'president', 'chairman of the board of directors', 'department in-charge' and so on. Once we start going after titles, we start becoming proud and think all good things come from us; and if it's not from us, it can't be good. What will we get out of titles and positions? There's a better title: 'Abd-Allah'. It's available and we can take it. We don't have to be this or that; we don't have to vie for it. Everybody can have it.

I go to masjids across the country and in every masjid I come across 2-3 people who say, 'I started this Masjid all by myself, Alhamdulillah. All praise belongs to Allah but nobody was here when I started this masjid.' Yes, except the other two who also started this masjid 'by themselves'.

NAJWA LEADS TO UNDERMINING THE LEADER

Now in these ayat, we have to understand that the role of the Messenger ﷺ was not just as a Messenger but as the head of an organization; some of his followers, i.e. the munafiqeen,

were undermining his position as the head.

The guidance we are getting in these verses is that when these people get together, they start demoralizing him and when they get to the meeting, they mock him so that he may look bad. "Then they greet you with what Allah did not greet you with." Allah greets the Messenger ﷺ with salaam . But they say, 'As'saamu-alaikum,' which means, 'Death be upon you.' The other possible meaning of the ayah is that they say Salaam but they don't mean Salaam. It's like answering the greeting in such a way that you give a look of death. That's not salaam and that's not peace. So, when they greet with the insincere greetings or curse the Prophet ﷺ and see that no punishment came upon them and no lightning struck them, they say 'how come Allah did not punish us for what we say?' If he really was a Messenger, we would have been obliterated the moment we insulted him. What kind of a Messenger is this?'

Do you see that it all started with najwa and it ended up with them losing their imaan!! In that meeting, deep down inside they said words of Kufr.

"The only thing enough for them is hell and what a horrible place that is."

"Those of who you who have imaan, when you are alone in a secret meeting then do not hold a meeting full of sin and

animosity and disobedience to the messenger; instead have a meeting that leads to goodness and taqwa. Be mindful of Allah, for you will be herded towards him. Verily najwa is from Shaytan."

That entire secret assembly, that entire secret meeting, that sub-meeting in the car parking lot, that's from Shaytan. It's only there to cause grief. You see the twelve people held a meeting and everybody agreed. Everybody made dua afterwards. The meeting is done. As you are leaving, you notice the three trouble makers are standing in the parking lot in the corner and talking and pointing fingers and you think, 'I can sense trouble there.'

Yes, it's true; they can cause grief. But others shouldn't be too worried. They are not going to be harming them at all except by the permission of Allah. Just like in shura, we put our trust in Allah. The same way, when there is the problem of najwa, we still put our trust in Allah.

A SOLUTION TO DEAL WITH THE TROUBLEMAKERS

Now comes one of my favorite parts of the ayat that deals with solving the problem of najwa.

When people come as a bloc, what immediately comes to mind? Troublemakers. Do they come to the meeting early or late? They come late. They have their little meeting and they

take their sweet time in coming and when they come, they sit at the back. And when they sit at the back, they sit together. When the Ameer is speaking, they whisper to each other and they think nobody can hear them whisper. The ameer says something and you hear their noises from the back – the whole meeting is disturbed. They come late; they sit in the back and they cause disturbance. They don't have genuine concerns or comments, but they have complaints and snickers, condescending and dismissive comments. So Allah revealed a solution for the meetings of the Prophetﷺ.

The munafiqoon used to sit in the back and they used to make trouble and disturb the whole meeting. By the way, can that still happen now? Yeah, definitely it can! So Allah says, 'Those of you who have imaan, when it is said to spread out in a meeting, spread out; meaning when the meeting is about to be held, don't sit next to each other. So you are spread out like a checkerboard. So when the few trouble makers walk in they cannot sit together they have to sit in-between people like Umar (R.A.) and Hamza (R.A) and other sahaba. A puny little munafiq cannot make the disturbing noises anymore because Umar (R.A.) will grab him by the neck and teach a lesson. The munafiqeen cannot make trouble anymore because they are all spread out. 'May Allah spread you out', meaning may Allah swt diversify you.

And when it is said to you, 'Leave', you should Leave. Don't stop in the parking lot. Don't eat shawarma or have a cup of tea at PC, Punjab Chai shop or somewhere else and talk about the meeting. Don't do it. Just leave once the meeting is done. No socializing after the meeting because it's an amanah or trust. Shaytan will come and make you discuss the meeting and it'll quickly turn into najwa. So just leave.

This is Quran's guidance for meetings. Do you know there are masjids in our country which have lawsuits in courts that started out of discussions in parking lots! If only we had followed Allah's advice, we could have saved ourselves from so much trouble. We forget that Allah wants us to lessen our burden, so he gives us such advice. Allah is not burdening us. Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is all-aware of what you do. The angels will be making dua for you because you fought the forces of Shaytan by avoiding unnecessary socializing that can lead to big trouble for your community. And Allah is in full view of what you are up to.

USE THIS COURSE AS AN ORIENTATION OF WORKERS OF ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS AND COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

These aspects of collective guidance should be used for members of Shura or organizational forums, especially new ones before they start any collective work. I know we get the

orientation about the timing, the agenda and the minutes but these are all administrative orientations. We also need spiritual orientation for our voluntary workers. And this can save us a lot of trouble. This sort of course should be repeated every few months because we, as human beings, forget very easily.

The next session is about leadership in Muslim organizations.

Chapter summary:

This chapter deals with the concept of najwa – secret gatherings. When a sub-group is formed within the organization as a forward bloc and they pre-decide the things before coming to meetings, or meet afterwards and do out-of-the-forum discussions about the matters discussed on the forum. These discussions often include backbiting, create animosity within the organization, and often lead to undermining the leader. This can be extremely damaging for an Islamic organization and must be avoided.

However, there are some acceptable forms of najwa too. Those types of najwa do not undermine the leader or the decisions made on the forum. Rather, they encourage additional charity, reconciliation between the people and so on. We have to realize that no secret conversation is secret enough for Allah. We should accordingly make sure that if at all we go on the route to najwa, it should be one that is praiseworthy rather than the one that is to be blamed.